

2003-2004 No Child Left Behind—Blue Ribbon Schools Program
Cover Sheet

Name of Principal Ms. Marci Mathis
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name Valwood School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 4380 Old US Highway 41 North
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address)

Hahira Georgia 31632 - 4116
City State Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

Tel. (229) 242-8491 Fax (229) 245-7894

Website/URL www.valwood.org E-mail mmathis@valwood.org

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2, and certify that to the best of my knowledge all information is accurate.

(Principal's Signature) Date _____

Name of Superintendent* Mr. J. Cobb Atkinson
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name _____ Tel. (229) 242-8491

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2, and certify that to the best of my knowledge it is accurate.

(Superintendent's Signature) Date _____

Name of School Board President/Chairperson Mr. Walter Elliott
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

I have reviewed the information in this package, including the eligibility requirements on page 2, and certify that to the best of my knowledge it is accurate.

(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature) Date _____

**Private Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

All data are the most recent year available.

DISTRICT (Questions 1-2 not applicable to private schools)

1. Number of schools in the district:

_____ Elementary schools
 _____ Middle schools
 _____ Junior high schools
 _____ High schools
 _____ Other (Briefly explain)

 _____ TOTAL

2. District Per Pupil Expenditure: _____
 Average State Per Pupil Expenditure: _____

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

3. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:

☐ Urban or large central city
☐ Suburban school with characteristics typical of an urban area
☐ Suburban
☒ Small city or town in a rural area
☐ Rural

4. 1st year Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school.
19 years If fewer than three years, how long was the previous principal at this school?

5. Number of students enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total		Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
K	21	15	36		7			
1	10	15	25		8			
2	16	16	32		9			
3	15	13	28		10			
4	11	9	20		11			
5	19	12	31		12			
6					Other			
TOTAL STUDENTS IN THE APPLYING SCHOOL →								172

6. Racial/ethnic composition of the students in the school:
- | | |
|-------------|----------------------------------|
| <u>96.6</u> | % White |
| <u>1.0</u> | % Black or African American |
| <u>0</u> | % Hispanic or Latino |
| <u>2.4</u> | % Asian/Pacific Islander |
| <u>0</u> | % American Indian/Alaskan Native |
| 100% | Total |

7. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the past year: 2.9 %

(This rate includes the total number of students who transferred to or from different schools between October 1 and the end of the school year, divided by the total number of students in the school as of October 1, multiplied by 100.)

(1)	Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1 until the end of the year.	0
(2)	Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1 until the end of the year.	5
(3)	Subtotal of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	5
(4)	Total number of students in the school as of October 1	172
(5)	Subtotal in row (3) divided by total in row (4)	.029
(6)	Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	2.9

8. Limited English Proficient students in the school: 0 %
0 Total Number Limited English Proficient

Number of languages represented: _____

Specify languages: _____

9. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: N/A %

N/A Total Number Students Who Qualify

If this method does not produce a reasonably accurate estimate of the percentage of students from low-income families or the school does not participate in the federally-supported lunch program, specify a more accurate estimate, tell why the school chose it, and explain how it arrived at this estimate.

10. Students receiving special education services: 0 %
0 Total Number of Students Served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

<u> </u> - Autism	<u> 1 </u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u> </u> - Deafness	<u> 2 </u> Other Health Impaired
<u> </u> - Deaf-Blindness	<u> </u> - Specific Learning Disability
<u> </u> - Hearing Impairment	<u> </u> - Speech or Language Impairment
<u> </u> - Mental Retardation	<u> </u> - Traumatic Brain Injury
<u> </u> - Multiple Disabilities	<u> </u> - Visual Impairment Including Blindness

11. Indicate number of full-time and part-time staff members in each of the categories below:

Number of Staff

	<u>Full-time</u>	<u>Part-Time</u>
Administrator(s)	<u> 2 </u>	<u> </u>
Classroom teachers	<u> 13 </u>	<u> 0 </u>
Special resource teachers/specialists	<u> 2 </u>	<u> 4 </u>
Paraprofessionals	<u> 6 </u>	<u> 1 </u>
Support staff	<u> 2 </u>	<u> 2 </u>
Total number	<u> 25 </u>	<u> 7 </u>

12. Average school student-“classroom teacher” ratio: 15 : 1
13. Show the attendance patterns of teachers and students as a percentage. The student dropout rate is defined by the state. The student drop-off rate is the difference between the number of entering students and the number of exiting students from the same cohort. (From the same cohort, subtract the number of exiting students from the number of entering students; divide that number by the number of entering students; multiply by 100 to get the percentage drop-off rate.) Briefly explain in 100 words or fewer any major discrepancy between the dropout rate and the drop-off rate. (Only middle and high schools need to supply dropout rates and only high schools need to supply drop-off rates.)

	2002-2003	2001-2002	2000-2001	1999-2000	1998-1999
Daily student attendance	97	98	98	97	98
Daily teacher attendance	98	97	98	96	98
Teacher turnover rate	11	0	10	15	10
Student dropout rate	-	-	-	-	-
Student drop-off rate	-	-	-	-	-

PART III – SUMMARY

Valwood School, located in Valdosta, Georgia, is an independent, co-educational, college-preparatory day school serving 395 students from pre-kindergarten to twelfth grade. The school seeks college bound students from diverse cultural, religious, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Valwood's three-part mission guides its work with students and families, calling for challenging academics, a pervasive focus on character, and service to the community.

The school centers on five key objectives in its work with students and families:

- Valwood challenges each student to strive for academic excellence. The program is founded on a rigorous, traditional college-preparatory curriculum designed to foster intellectual curiosity and to enable each student to read with understanding, think critically and creatively, speak fluently, and write effectively.
- Valwood promotes personal growth outside the classroom. The school encourages participation in the arts, athletics, and experiences in the natural world. Valwood programs are designed to develop leadership, self-confidence, independence, physical and artistic abilities, and spiritual and moral growth.
- Valwood is committed to the development of strong character. The values of integrity, honesty, and fair play that we demand in our students are reinforced daily. We expect our students to conduct themselves according to a code of honor that reaches beyond the classroom into all aspects of their education and lives.
- Valwood esteems the foundations of good citizenship. The school teaches service and responsibility to family, community, and society. Valwood also emphasizes the importance of global citizenship that includes thoughtful stewardship of the environment and understanding and respecting other cultures.
- Valwood is a community of students, teachers, and parents. Within this community, we give our students trust, freedom, and responsibility. The school fosters a spirit of mutual respect and friendship between students and teachers. Valwood prepares its students to face the challenges of college, career, and life with maturity, intelligence, skill, courage, grace, humor, and dignity.

Located in Foy Anderson Hall, the Lower School houses Valwood's pre-kindergarten through fifth grades. In all grades, rigor and nurture are combined in equal parts to ensure that each child has the opportunity to grow, develop, and realize his or her unique potential.

The Lower School curriculum fosters the intellectual development of children through an enriched, academically rigorous program. Each child is encouraged to develop study skills, reasoning, problem solving and critical thinking skills, and all students are challenged to think for themselves, to formulate their ideas, and to express them visually, orally and in writing.

Character and personal integrity serve as the foundation upon which the work of the Lower School rests. The four tenets of the Lower School Honor Code, posted prominently in all classrooms and emphasized regularly throughout the day, emphasize leadership, responsibility, accountability, and courtesy.

Through a variety of school-wide and division-wide projects, students learn to value service to the community. Students participate in food drives, visit area nursing homes, bake and collect cookies for deployed military personnel, and adopt needy families during the holiday season providing them with toys and food for Christmas.

PART IV – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

- 1. Describe in one page the meaning of the school's assessment results in reading (language arts or English) and mathematics in such a way that someone not intimately familiar with the tests can easily understand them.**

The School Percentile Rank for both the Total Reading Score and the Total Math Score of the Stanford Achievement Test, ninth edition (SAT – 9) is the average of the individual percentile ranks within that group. A percentile of 50 is the median, meaning half of the students nationally who took the test would be expected to receive a percentile rank above 50 and half of the students nationally who took the test would be expected to receive a percentile rank below 50. For Valwood School first graders, the average reading percentile rank attained for the 2003 test date was 86. This means that for all students nationally taking this test, Valwood students on average ranked equal to or above 86 percent of students nationally, and only 14 percent of students nationally ranked higher than the average Valwood student.

The SAT 9 Total Reading Score is obtained by finding a composite of scores for specific reading sub skills. Once the raw score is converted to a scaled score, the percentile rank is determined. First and second grade students are assessed on Word Study Skills, Word Reading and Reading Comprehension. Third grade students are assessed on Word Study Skills, Reading Vocabulary, and Reading Comprehension. Fourth and fifth grade students are assessed on Reading Vocabulary and Reading Comprehension. The five year average percentile ranks for Valwood students for Total Reading are: first grade – 91.6, second grade – 85.6, third grade – 84.2, fourth grade – 84.6, and fifth grade – 83.4.

The SAT 9 Total Math Score is based on the scores of three sub skills, all of which are the same for grades 1 – 5: Concepts of Numbers, Math Computation, and Math Applications. Once again, a raw score is converted to a scaled score, and from there a percentile rank is determined. Valwood's five year average percentile ranks for Total Mathematics are: first grade – 84.6, second grade – 86.4, third grade – 92.4, fourth grade – 88.8, and fifth grade – 87.4.

- 2. Show in one-half page (approximately 200 words) how the school uses assessment data to understand and improve student and school performance.**

Valwood's standardized test scores are evidence of the high level of achievement that has consistently been expected by our faculty and attained by our students. Individual and group score reports are analyzed carefully so that teachers can identify target areas for improvement and then adjust the curriculum accordingly.

Classroom assessment is both formative and summative at Valwood. Teachers formally gauge student achievement both at short-term and long-term intervals using lesson and unit assessments found with curricula, teacher made tests, journals, and projects. Additionally, teachers assess individual student achievement informally through questioning, discussion, and observation.

The yearly recorded assessment data is used by faculty to communicate with each other strengths and weaknesses of students advancing to the next grade so that the next teacher can be more attendant to the needs of individuals and the group.

3. Describe in one-half page how the school communicates student performance, including assessment data, to parents, students, and the community.

Standardized test scores are communicated with parents at a year end conference with their child's teacher. Parents are also given tables and graphs showing the scores for the previous five years for all grades and a cumulative average for those years. It is left with the parent to decide whether and how to share standardized test data with their children.

Classroom performance is regularly communicated with the student and with the parents. Because of the low teacher student ratio and the presence of paraprofessionals at each grade level, teachers are able to work with students individually and communicate progress. Teachers send home a newsletter and all graded work weekly, and parents are asked to sign all tests and return them to the school. Formal reports are sent home eight times per year. At midquarter, parents are sent detailed narrative reports on student progress. At the quarter, students in grades 2 - 5 receive skills-based numerical grades. Parent conferences are timed to coincide with the distribution of the first quarter report card so that student progress is explained individually with the parent and so that the parents and teacher may develop a collaborative relationship to enable student success.

Group standardized test scores are furnished to the community upon request, and we are always willing to discuss our student performance with interested business leaders, families, and others.

4. Describe in one-half page how the school will share its successes with other schools.

Valwood faculty are encouraged to attend and present on various topics at local, regional, and national conferences. Valwood teachers have developed relationships with other schools to help with the implementation of programs that have proven successful at Valwood. In the context of professional development, Valwood teachers willingly share positive aspects of our program and listen intently when others share theirs. In the community of Valdosta and Lowndes County, many of our teachers share successes with others socially in informal settings. Valwood will encourage teachers to continue to share successes with others, both through the newly designed website and through greater interaction professionally.

PART V – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. SCHOOL'S CURRICULUM:

Pre Kindergarten – is a developmentally appropriate program designed around what is educationally and developmentally appropriate for this age. It includes extensive opportunities for children to develop language, cognitive, physical, social, and problem solving skills. The program provides a learning-center based setting in which the children explore, experiment, and experience success. Daily group time includes songs, finger plays, language play, stories and discussions which incorporate the theme or concept under consideration. Daily unstructured, supervised outdoor play is provided for large musical and movement activities. Spanish instruction is provided twice a week.

Kindergarten through Fifth Grade –

- *Reading/Language Arts* – provides a complex variety of skills which are interconnected and are not isolated skills in and of themselves. Components are: phonemic awareness, phonics, reading, vocabulary, reading comprehension, speaking, writing, spelling and penmanship. Though the level of sophistication changes dramatically from grade to grade, all of the skills are taught from the earliest level on, building upon prior experiences and skills. By the end of the lower school, each student is expected to be able to read age appropriate materials with understanding, giving attention to correct grammar, and to express his or her ideas in both written and oral modes.
- *Mathematics* – includes mastery of basic math facts as well as understanding mathematical concepts, understanding the structure of the number system, understanding how to apply math skills to solve problems and using critical thinking, reasoning and logic to solve problems. Each level of mathematics builds upon prior levels. Once mastery is achieved, skills are continually reviewed, reinforced, practiced and applied in order to maintain a mastery level of performance.
- *Science* – is designed to involve the students in as much experiential learning as possible. Science concepts and attitudes and skills of investigation are part of the process of studying science. Course content is planned to help students develop an understanding of essential scientific ideas rather than focusing on the acquisition of facts. Each level of the curriculum includes study in the areas of life science, physical science, earth science and health.
- *Social Studies* – includes developing basic social, cultural and economic concepts. Vocabulary and knowledge of terms used in geography, politics, culture and history are included in the course content. Activities intentionally promote building citizenship and thinking skills, encourage acceptance of people and their cultures and make connection between history and current events. Developing map and globe skills and studying geography is an integral part of the program. The celebration of holidays, recognition and understanding of national symbols and documents, and individuals who have significantly impacted our county and culture are included at appropriate grade levels. As students get older the social institutions which are included in their study get broader and more complex.
- *Foreign Language* – Spanish is introduced as a second language from pre-kindergarten to fifth grade through authentic music, plays, stories, games and rhymes. Students are taught basic vocabulary and how to express themselves in simple conversations. They are given a basic knowledge of cultures, holidays and traditions of Spanish-speaking countries. At each

grade level material from the previous level is revisited and expanded. Natural language is not learned in a linear fashion but through repeated use and expansion.

- *Art* – Pre K and Kindergarten art activities are part of the daily program: drawing, painting, molding, cutting and gluing experiences emphasize process rather than product. First through fifth grades receive art instruction weekly learning the basic elements of art and the principles of design. Exposure to great artists and their work is also included in the program.
- *Music* – is weekly and includes singing, playing classroom instruments, moving and listening to music. Students learn to read traditional music notation but are also encouraged to improvise and create their own pieces. Music from many cultures and eras is included. Singing is the primary focus; instruments are used throughout the year to enhance the program. Students in fourth and fifth grades have the opportunity to learn to play a stringed instrument.
- *Physical education* – is designed to promote good health, physical fitness and develop good motor skills. Implementation of the curriculum is based on developmentally appropriate activities according to age/grade levels. The program is divided into two main areas: physical fitness and movement skills. Concepts and skills which are introduced continue to be developed, practiced and reinforced until they are mastered.

2. SCHOOL READING CURRICULUM

SRA/Open Court Reading Program was selected for the Lower School in part because its primary goal is to teach children to think independently. The program pursues this goal both by its active cognitive approach to reading and by its strong emphasis on writing. The program is founded on direct instruction with a heavy emphasis on phonics. Open Court techniques include immediate feedback to the child and the teacher so that both know what the child has learned and where the child needs help. This is mastery learning in its most efficient form because children are given the means to correct themselves almost immediately and painlessly; this means daily success for almost all children. An added advantage of this integrated mastery learning is that it gives children the habit of self critique early in life. Open Court pedagogy rests upon a balance between individualized instruction (workshop) and whole group instruction. Mastery learning techniques are used to teach automaticity in basic skills without the boredom of traditional drill. The program introduces students to the wonders of the past and present here at home and abroad making them more culturally aware citizens while at the same time allowing students to inculcate skills and knowledge that will help them to live better lives.

3. OTHER CURRICULUM AREA---MATHEMATICS

The math program is designed to teach children to think mathematically and is based upon the idea of making mathematics real for students. Students see that mathematics is useful and important in their own lives, and learning mathematics becomes more enjoyable for them. In every grade the program emphasizes thinking skills, problem solving strategies, real applications, mental arithmetic, estimation, approximation, measurement, organizing data, geometry, probability, statistics, and algebra. The program ensures that students are introduced to mathematics concepts and skills in context at appropriate age levels. They encounter these concepts and use these skills again and again throughout the year and in subsequent years in different, age appropriate contexts.

The math program is taught at a lively pace but not rushed through at the expense of achievement. The program allows for students to practice skills, to solve thinking problems and

to participate in enrichment activities. Math games are a vital part of the program. By using manipulative materials, students are provided practice opportunities to work out important mathematical ideas and problem solving strategies. By discovering and understanding the reasons for *doing* math, the students begin to understand that mathematics is related to their reality and that math can be used to help them understand the real world.

4. INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS USED TO IMPROVE STUDENT LEARNING

Each *child* that we teach is different and unique. Each *class* that enters our door from year to year has different needs and different styles. The teachers are committed to using a variety of instructional approaches to accommodate different learning styles and to enhance student learning. In differentiating instruction, teachers engage the students in direct instruction, guided practice, cooperative learning, project based learning, whole class instruction, performance based tasks, and individual projects and study. We know that students need to be actively involved in learning, so we provide hands-on activities which include games, experimentation, and exploration. Students are involved in independent research, oral and dramatic presentations and off campus learning experiences. We utilize the talents and techniques of other teachers in our school as well as valuable resources within our community and our state university. Technology is also very important as we strive to meet the many student needs and learning styles in our school.

5. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Continuous improvement in methods of instruction results in a high level of student performance. Our teachers are very eager to embrace new ideas and programs as they strive to reach each child they teach. Our school encourages continuing education and advanced degrees and provides financial assistance for teachers when possible. Many opportunities are provided for teachers to attend workshops and state conferences. Those teachers who participate bring their new found knowledge and ideas back to their co-workers and share what they have learned at their grade level meetings and our faculty meetings. They periodically visit schools to share ideas and to discover other approaches to teaching as well as to review instructional materials and programs that have effectively work for other schools. As programs change and new ones are adopted in the lower school, staff development is provided for training with the new program and use of the component parts of that program. In particular, ongoing training has most recently been provided for language arts teachers with the reading program.

PART VI - PRIVATE SCHOOL ADDENDUM

The purpose of this addendum is to obtain additional information from private schools as noted below. Attach the completed addendum to the end of the application, before the assessment data tables.

Private school association(s): Georgia Independent School Association (Give primary religious or independent association only)

Does the school have nonprofit, tax exempt (501(c)(3)) status? Yes X No

Part II - Demographics

1. What are the 2003-2004 tuition rates, by grade? (Do not include room, board, or fees.)

\$ <u>3535</u> K	\$ <u>5814</u> 1 st	\$ <u>5814</u> 2 nd	\$ <u>5814</u> 3 rd	\$ <u>5814</u> 4 th	\$ <u>5814</u> 5 th
\$ <u> </u> 6 th	\$ <u> </u> 7 th	\$ <u> </u> 8 th	\$ <u> </u> 9 th	\$ <u> </u> 10 th	\$ <u> </u> 11 th
\$ <u> </u> 12 th	\$ <u> </u> Other				

2. What is the educational cost per student?
(School budget divided by enrollment) \$ 7893
3. What is the average financial aid per student? \$ 3563 / student on financial aid
\$ 307 / student body member
4. What percentage of the annual budget is devoted to scholarship assistance and/or tuition reduction? 8 %
5. What percentage of the student body receives scholarship assistance, including tuition reduction? 15 %

PART VII – ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Stanford Achievement Test – 9th Edition

Spring 1995 National Norms: 1999-2000 through 2002 – 2003; Spring 1991 Norms: 1998 - 1999

Harcourt Brace & Company

Percentiles

	2002-2003	2001 – 2002**	2000-2001	1999-2000	1998 - 1999
Testing Month	April	N/A See Note Below	April	April	April
5th Grade					
Total Reading	89		85	83	81
Total Math	86		88	83	95
Number of Students Tested	17		28	26	30
Percent of Students Tested	100		97	100	100
Number of Students Excluded	0		1*	0	0
Percent of Students Excluded	0		3	0	0
4th Grade					
Total Reading	88		84	82	87
Total Math	84		93	86	93
Number of Students Tested	29		20	28	26
Percent of Students Tested	100		100	97	100
Number of Students Excluded	0		0	1*	0
Percent of Students Excluded	0		0	3	0
3rd Grade					
Total Reading	83		86	77	87
Total Math	89		94	96	96
Number of Students Tested	18		18	17	20
Percent of Students Tested	100		100	100	100
Number of Students Excluded	0		0	0	0
Percent of Students Excluded	0		0	0	0
2nd Grade					
Total Reading	82		90	641	87
Total Math	88		88	620	89
Number of Students Tested	27		27	18	14
Percent of Students Tested	100		100	100	100
Number of Students Excluded	0		0	0	0
Percent of Students Excluded	0		0	0	0
1st Grade					
Total Reading	93		91	94	95
Total Math	90		86	83	92
Number of Students Tested	32		16	28	17
Percent of Students Tested	97		100	100	100
Number of Students Excluded	1*		0	0	0
Percent of Students Excluded	3		0	0	0

*Student excluded due to inability to reschedule make-up test in a timely manner.

**No scores for 2001-2002 as Valwood participated in a norming study for the Stanford 10.